

Fact Sheet:

What You Should Know About Lead in Soil

What is lead?

Lead is a metal with a number of uses such as in weights and lead-acid storage batteries. Lead can be released from: industrial sources, leaded gasoline (now banned for cars in Canada), or flaking from lead-based paint. In varying amounts, lead is in our diets, water, air, soil, and consumer goods.

Lead in soil

Lead levels in soils generally reflect soil conditions, geology and the historic influence of contamination from local sources such as the combustion of leaded gasoline. In Ontario, typical background concentrations range up to approximately 45 parts per million in rural parkland areas and up to approximately 120 parts per million in urban parkland areas that are not contaminated by local point sources. "Typical background concentrations" refers to the amount of lead found in soils not from known sources of contamination, such as industries.

In residential areas adjacent to current or historic commercial or industrial operations, lead levels in soil may be higher.

In older residential areas, lead levels in surface soil may be found to be higher than 200 parts per million. This may be because of close proximity to road traffic (the past use of leaded gasoline), erosion of leaded paint from buildings and fences, and past or current industrial sources.

How can lead affect my health?

If you have any concerns about exposure to lead, please contact your local health department or your family doctor.

More information

Lead in Drinking Water – Questions and answers

<http://www.portal.gov.on.ca/drinkingwater/272698.pdf>

Health Canada facts – Lead and human health

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/environ/lead-plomb-eng.php>

Health Canada facts – Lead-based paint

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/prod/paint-peinture-eng.php>

Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation – Lead in older homes

http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/co/maho/yohoyohe/inaiqu/inaiqu_007.cfm